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ABSTRACT

Educational effects of migrant student mobility are reviewed and issues and recommendations for educational continuity are offered for discussion by policymakers. Considerations for discussion of mobility are presented: continuity of age-grade level progression and education/social/health services; agency responsibility; communication requirements; uniformity of instruction; graduation requirements; assessment procedures; record-keeping; materials cross-match indexing; and coordination of instructional, counseling, and administrative components. Issues inhibiting educational continuity are identified: lack of integration of migrant educational services; need for bilingual instruction; ineffective parent advisory councils; lack of coordination among funding and service delivery agencies; problematic special education referrals; inadequate demographic data; interstate differences in competency testing and graduation requirements; inadequate records transfer; lack of communication among programs; and need for flexible programming, career guidance counseling, remedial classes, and uniform curriculum. Three recommendations call for research agenda developed by federal agencies to include needs studies, demographic data, migration patterns, nature of interschool communication, methods for meeting student needs; development of support services and remedial opportunities and innovative planning and administrative procedures; and a national interstate migrant student policy including uniform definitions of migrant students and reporting regulations, coordinated formulas for fund allocation, guides to agency and administrator responsibilities, and federal funding of program coordination and development. (LFL)

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KEY ISSUES IN ACHIEVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL CONTINUITY FOR MIGRANT STUDENTS

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TASK FORCE DISCUSSION PAPER

Topic: Key Issues in Achievement of Educational Continuity for Migrant Students

Introduction

Migrant educators have for some time recognized the disruptive effects that a mobile lifestyle has on student participation and performance in education programs. This recognition was formalized through passage of Title I (Migrant Education) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, wherein Congress cited mobility as one of the chief factors influencing student performance.

Through the efforts of the National Association of State Directors of Migrant Education, several exemplary programs have been initiated to deal with the unique problems presented in serving the mobile migrant student. Noteworthy achievements accomplished in a relatively short time span, are the Migrant Student Record Transfer System and skills lists in reading, computation, oral language and preschool development. The MSRTS and skills lists have helped to create meaningful linkages, establish avenues for sharing information, and bring to order the numerous dissimilar education systems of states and localitites.

The goals of the Interstate Migrant Education Project in the area of continuity are to:

1. Build upon what we have learned from the MSRTS, skills lists and similar exemplary projects in order to identify and implement additional methods whereby the disruptive effects

of family mobility on the education of migrant students can be minimized.

2. Stimulate continued dialogue among education policy makers that will call attention to the need for alternative methods for responding to the needs of mobile students.

3. Stimulate interest among agencies that will result in research programs designed to answer questions regarding education of mobile students.

Perspectives on Effects Of Mobility

Over the years, numerous studies have cited mobility as a disruptive factor in the education of migrant students. Three recent studies call further attention to some of the problems attributable to mobility. These are presented below.

California - Patterns of Migrant Education 1980-

"The pattern of schooling for migrant children is therefore characterized by an interrupted attendance record in which the migrant child loses significant amounts of time during the school year as compared to the attendance of other children...Significant segments of instruction are missed by the migrant child and oftentimes, particularly in secondary schools, the instruction completed by such children when in attendance is not sufficient to receive the appropriate course credits...."

Poe and Rice, Needs Barriers and Evaluation of Secondary Migrant Educational Education ... 1979

"...There was general agreement across most local vocational educators and between most local vocational and migrant directors regarding the issues, barriers and needs that must be addressed in order to provide effective vocational education for the population... Of the 28 suggested barriers, six were judged to have been not only valid but also highly critical by over one-third of the respondents." Three of six barriers, that speak to the mobility issue, and were ranked according to perceived importance were:

1. Constant movements of students from one LEA to another.

2. Irregular school attendance, often attributed to employers' needs is a handicap to worthwhile participation in a

vocational program.

3. It is difficult to include parents in the educational program of the student due to items such as the lack of parental support and/or lack of parental understanding of the educational program...." p.52

Barressi, J. Policy Options for Mobile Handicapped Students, 1980.

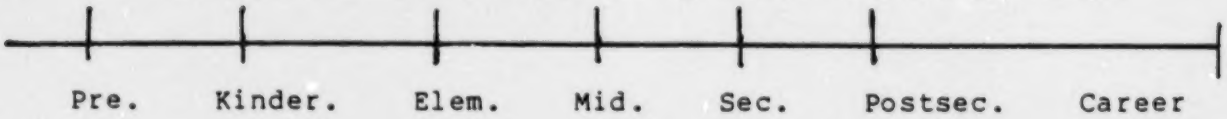
....Mobility negatively affects achievement and self concept; information, planning and management systems do not presently address the issue of student mobility at the elementary and secondary school levels; there is less parent involvement among mobile populations than among stationary ones; there is inadequate interstate and interagency communication and cooperation on these students behalf; there is little information on the types of children who are mobile other than the migrant child.... The extent to which pupils change schools during the school year, within or between districts, as well as the characteristics of the mobile student population are factors that have significant implications for staffing, class assignment, curriculum design, purchasing, providing student transportation and establishing bus routes, record keeping and budgets," p.8.

As can be seen, there are numerous opinions regarding the influence on mobility or migrant student education. Reports and studies containing hard data regarding the relationship between the two are scarce or unavailable. Yet, there are numerous people who identify mobility as a key disruptive factor affecting education of migrant students. The degree of influence is presently unknown.

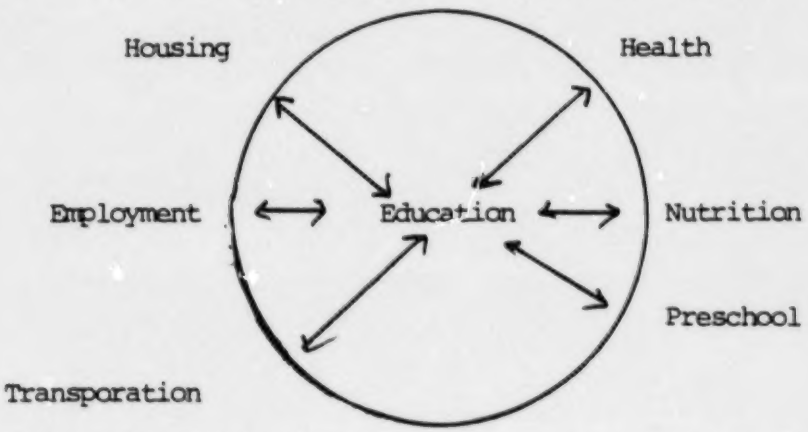
Framework For Identifying Continuity Issues

The brief outline presented below, lists some of the major considerations that can be used to frame discussion related to the mobility issue. These issues are:

a. Age-Grade Level Continuity (Vertical)/Progression



b. Education/Social-Health Services Continuity e.g., Interagency sharing-coordinaton of identification, records storage, and delivery of services.



c. Determination of roles and responsibilities of various people involved in the education of migrant students including: State Department of Education, State Superintendent, State School Board, State Department of Migrant Education, Migrant Service Centers, MSRTS Terminal Operators, Migrant Project Directors, Principals, Teachers, Teachers Aides and support personnel, in sending, receiving, sending - states.

d. Determination of the communication requirements among people listed in C in order to enhance continuity of education for migrant students.

e. Uniformity or common base of instruction between age-grade levels, schools, districts and states through

use of common curriculum units, skills lists, or core study units among and between sending, receiving, sending schools.

F. Coordination and acceptance of a common base of graduation requirements at the secondary level.

g. Acceptance of core study units, skills acquisition, or other mode of instruction through use of common assessment/achievement procedures such as competency based, mastery or validation testing.

h. Coordination of instructional continuity through materials cross match indexing.

i. Maintenance and expansion of uniform communication storage and information sharing procedures via the Migrant Student Record Transfer System.

j. Coordination of instructional, counseling, and administrative components of migrant education.

k. Coordination among sending-receiving-sending schools/ staffs within states and between states and on an annual basis.

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following identified issues and recommendations relating to the topic of continuity were adapted from information provided in the following reports:

Patterns of Migrant Education in California A report for the Deputy Superintendent for Program by the Ad Hoc Migrant Education Task Force 1980.

Policy Options for Mobile Handicapped Students, J. Barresi September 1980.

Needs, Barriers and Evaluation of Secondary Migrant Vocational Education, Poe and Rice, January 1979.

Special Education Needs of Migrant Handicapped Children, ECS 1980.

Issues

1. Migrant education does not effectively intergrate the delivery of migrant educational services with the delivery of other educational services in school districts.

2. The primary mode of instruction for the majority of migrant children needs to be in two languages until the child can benefit from instruction in English.

3. Migrant education parent advisory councils are sporadic in their effectiveness, do not have a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities and have not been fully implemented in some school districts.

4. Provision of migrant education funds for medical, dental and social service assistance is not uniform and is not governed by statewide standards or criteria. Further, there is little coordination among various social, medical, and dental service delivery systems and migrant education.

5. Teachers often times do not get to know the mobile child's needs. Mobile children often are not in one school long enough for teachers to observe performance and decide whether educational problems require a referral for special education assessment or are merely the result of sporadic attendance and frequent changes in enrollment.

6. Interstate differences regarding minimum competency testing and graduation requirements.
7. Incomplete and inadequate transfer of student records.

8. Lack of communication and cooperation between programs and agencies serving mobile students.

9. The persistent problem of inadequate data about this population must be addressed.

10. There is a need for programming which acknowledges and adjusts for student mobility.

11. Appropriate guidance and counseling services are needed to assist students in career awareness and planning.

12. Increased emphasis should be placed on developmental and remedial classes in math, reading and writing skills to prepare migrant students to perform better in postsecondary and vocational programs.

13. A uniform and comprehensive curriculum, designed to provide continuity of instruction for migrant students, needs to be developed for inter and intrastate use.

14. Curriculum for migrant students needs to be tailored to meet the individual learning needs of each student.

Recommendations

I. It is recommended that the U.S. Department of Education Migrant Division or other appropriate resource, develop a long term research agenda to determine:

a. The current needs of mobile migrant students;

b. Who constitutes the mobile migrant population and what are the current demographics of this group of people;

c. The impact effects of the mobile migrant population on communities, schools, programs, school budgets, transportation staffing, and related requirements;

d. The migration patterns of the population in terms of travel patterns, geography, impact areas, frequency of migration and duration of stay;

e. What proportion of the migrant population has been identified;

f. What are the mobility patterns of the migrant student? That is, do migrant students actually move from community to community with their families, if so, how many and how often?

g. How can states and LEA's target resources and tailor programs to meet the variable needs of the migrant student population?

h. What is the nature of communication between schools concerning mobile migrant students and what modifications are needed to improve interschool communication?

i. What changes should local school administrators encourage in order to make public education experiences more readily available, accessible and continuous for mobile as well as stationary students?

II. There should be a concerted effort to develop comprehensive

educational programs to serve all migrant children. The programs should be characterized by:

a. A wide range and variety of support services including guidance and counseling services and developmental/ remedial opportunities in math, reading, and writing skills;

b. Innovative planning and administrative procedures including flex-scheduling and systematic needs assessment;

III. There should be a clear national, interstate migrant student education policy for serving the target population.

Such a national policy might provide for inclusion of the following items:

a. Uniform definitions of migrant students for all programs;

b. Uniform reporting regulations for all programs serving students classified as migrant students;

c. Uniform, or at least coordinated eligibility requirement that reflect the situation in the field;

d. Uniform, coordinated formulas for allocating money and non categorical spending;

e. An outline of the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies involved in providing services to migrant students;

f. A useful, understandable guide for administrators to use in developing/implementing programs; and

g. Federal funding of several mechanisms such as, students records system, dissemination systems, and research and development that would facilitate program coordination and development. Such a procedure might also include a procedure similar to the "child find" preceding a special education.